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TAGS: OPRC KMDR KPAO TW

SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: Cross-Straits Relations, US Arms Procurement

SUMMARY:

¶11. Taiwan dailies June 7 carried reports on three main topics: China's military buildup, constitutional amendments, and a junior-high school exam in Taiwan. With regard to the first topic, the pro-independence "Liberty Times," Taiwan's largest daily, and the pro-independence "Taiwan Daily" revealed the contents of a report on China's military strength conducted by U.S. Department of Defense. The banner-headline on the front page of the "Liberty Times" announced that "China's Military Buildup is The Same As a Terrorist Threat"; the "Taiwan Daily" carried a front-page banner-headline that read: "The United States Lists China's Military Buildup and International Terrorist's Actions As The Threats To Which The United States Should Be Most Alert." As to the second and the third topics, both the centrist, pro-status quo "China Times" and the conservative, pro-unification "United Daily News" carried reports on their front pages regarding the constitutional amendments that could possibly be passed today in the National Assembly, and the results of the fundamental ability exam for junior high school students.

¶12. In terms of editorials and commentaries, the pro-independence "Liberty Times" editorialized that Taiwan should not be afraid of postponing talks with China, and added that there is no need to push for such talks. The pro-independence "Taiwan Daily" said in the editorial that Taiwan should be harsh toward China to prevent another "Hsu Wen-lung" incident from occurring (i.e. when the Taiwan founder of the Chi-Mei Group was forced to show support for China's "Anti-Secession Law"). The pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" editorialized that Taiwan should pass the U.S. arms procurements bill to show Taiwan's resolution regarding self-defense, which would discourage China from carrying out its military buildup. However, the conservative, pro-unification, English-language "China Post" took a moderate stance and said in its editorial that no country, especially Taiwan, would benefit from the rivalry between the United States and China. With regard to commentaries, Mainland Affairs Council Chairman Joseph Wu urged in a commentary in "The Taipei Times" that China must follow Taiwan's lead and become more democratic.

A) ``Not Afraid of Postponing [Talks]'' and No Need to `Push For Talks'

The pro-independence "Liberty Times" [circulation: 800,000] editorialized (6/7):

" . As to China, [Taiwan's strategy of] `Not Afraid of Postponing [Talks]' is correct, but to `push for talks' is a terrible mistake. Taiwan's independent sovereignty is the status quo, [so] why is Taiwan in a rush to conduct talks with China? Let us seriously remember that China has recently passed its `Anti-Secession Law,' authorizing the use of non-peaceful measures to counter Taiwan. China's military threat to Taiwan is also on the rise. China has treated Taiwan in a hegemonic way, and has utilized the measure of `countering Taiwan people by Taiwan people' to carry out its unification propaganda and to undermine unity between the Taiwan people. Taiwan, however, `seeks talks' [with China] like a moth darting into a flame, and as a result is sending the wrong signal to the international community that the Taiwan people do not really care about China's military threat, and the Taiwan people might not even consider the existence of the threat. If it happens to be so, no matter how the talk might proceed, Taiwan is doomed to be a loser."

B) "If Taiwan, When Needed, Cannot Be Harsh Toward China, There Is a Possibility That the `Hsu Wen-lung' Incident Could Happen to Other Taiwan Merchants in China"

The pro-independence "Taiwan Daily" [circulation: 150,000] editorialized (6/7):

". The Beijing authorities know that the Taiwan government has no choice but to propose the peaceful route of `reconciliation and coexistence,' and China bullies the Taiwan merchants investing in China after figuring out that

no one would defend them. After the passage of time, there is possibility that some half-hearted Taiwan merchants based in China would have a biased mentality to 'identify a thief as their father' [to identify China as their mother country]. Even Hsu Wen-lung, a local entrepreneur filled with a Taiwan-centered identity, would be hesitate to assert immediately his dissenting position regarding the DPP government's plan to overly seek 'reconciliation and coexistence' [with China.] An emotion of isolation and disappointment would gradually occur.

"In fact, comparing it with other countries in the world, Taiwan has more of a position to show a stern attitude toward the Chinese government if necessary. We can see that the United States has recently called upon China for an answer regarding China's military buildup, its human rights record, and the Tiananmen Square incident. However, Taiwan has been very moderate on these issues. ."

C) "Taking Rumsfeld's Warning to Heart"

The pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" [circulation: 30,000] commented in an editorial (6/7):

". The 'China Threat Theory' is no longer a possibility - the threat is a reality. Taiwan has had to deal with this threat on its own for some time, but now other countries are gradually beginning to get the message. The Singapore meeting is just the starting point for international action, and hopefully we will see even more countries facing up to the threat posed by China's expansionism with more concrete action. Perhaps this will all lead to new policies designed to contain China.

"Taiwan is at the center of the First Island Chain, the front line constraining China's expansion. It has shouldered this burden for more than 60 years, but now people in Taiwan and the U.S. are becoming increasingly concerned that it will become a breach in the chain. The hurdles faced by the arms procurement bill in the legislature means that the imbalance in military strength between the two sides of the Strait will increase. The lack of commitment to self-defense might encourage China to take advantage of the situation with a military move.

". [U]nless Taiwan is willing to become China's docile pet, it should bare its teeth and win some respect. It needs defensive weapons to do this. The military gap between the two sides of the Strait is widening daily, causing the international community to lose its faith in the commitment of the Taiwanese people. Eventually, if this is left unchecked, Taiwan will lose its self-confidence.

"For Taiwan's sake and for regional security, the legislature should hold an additional session to pass the arms procurement bill as soon as possible."

D) "Making China an Enemy"

The conservative, pro-unification, English-language "China Post" [circulation: 30,000] editorialized (6/7):

"Not a day goes by without hearing some American academic or a ranking or retired U.S. official warn against the potential danger China poses to the U.S. via Taiwan in five, 10, or 30 years.

"Senior U.S. officials, including Congressional leaders, have one after another come out recently to caution against the "China threat" in one way or another.

"Washington used to criticize Beijing over trade and human rights issues but not directly challenge its military buildup.

"In its forthcoming annual report on China's military, the Pentagon is said to depict the Chinese expansion in an 'overly antagonistic picture'.

"Last week, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld forcefully charged at an international forum in Singapore that Beijing spends too much on its military buildup, risking a military imbalance in the Asia-Pacific region.

"Beijing earlier this year announced a 12.6 percent increase in military spending to roughly US\$30 billion. Though it is about one 15th of the Pentagon's budget, Rumsfeld deemed it was too much.

"The U.S. and its ally Japan have also announced for the first time that Taiwan is under their security umbrella and threatened the European Union with sanctions if EU lifts a 16-year-old arms embargo on China.

"Since March, Beijing has bound itself by a domestic law to attack Taiwan if the island tries to break the status quo by

declaring independence. Washington's new hostility toward Beijing has sparked fears of regional division and instability.

"Rivalry between the world's sole superpower and the most populous and economically thriving country benefits no one, especially Taiwan."

E) "China Must Follow Taiwan's Lead"

Joseph Wu, Chairman of the Mainland Affairs Council commented in the pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" [circulation: 30,000] (6/7):

". [T]he question of whether or not China will adopt liberal democracy is an important benchmark for Taiwan as it considers its future relationship with China.

". [S]ome people may take an optimistic opinion that the fourth generation of CCP leaders will be more flexible and pragmatic, and that they will allow gradual liberalization and political reform. There is, however, a difference between expectations and real life.

". Only by learning from Taiwan's political development can the CCP build a new China."

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